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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 ONY-00 /011 W
----------066022 151105Z /13
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3937

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4446

STADIS//////////

FOR NEA/ARN DRAPER

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN JEWRY: MARRIAGE PROPOSALS AND PAROLE

REF: STATE 164172

1. AGREE THAT PAROLE PROCEDURE, IF IT LEAKS, NEED PROVIDE NO INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEM WITH SYRIANS. IF THEY ASK, BELIEVE WE CAN EXPLAIN DEVELOPMENT SATISFACTORILY WITHIN CONTEXT THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS PROBLEM, I.E., CONGRESSIONAL, PRESIDENTIAL AND JEWISH COMMUNITY INTEREST IN U.S.

2. YOU SHOULD BE AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT MARRIAGE PROPOSAL APPLICATIONS HAVE HIT A SNAG WHICH COULD POSE MAJOR PROBLEM. ON JULY 13, HAVING MET WITH SHALOM PREVIOUS EVENING, I DISCUSSED MARRIAGE PROPOSALS IN DETAIL WITH DAOUDY AND LEFT HIM COPIES OF 12 PROPOSALS WHICH HAD BEEN RECEIVED THUS FAR. DAOUDY ASKED IF THESE PROPOSALS CONCERNED THE CASES IN WHICH PRESIDENT CARTER HAD EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL INTEREST. I SAID THEY WERE, ALTHOUGH AS HE KNEW, CARTER HAD SPOKEN IN GENERAL ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF ALL OF THE UNMARRIED WOMEN AND PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD HAD REPLIED THAT HE WOULD BE PRE-
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PARED, GIVEN CARTER'S PERSONAL INTEREST, TO REVIEW THEM ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. I DREW DAOUDY'S ATTENTION TO THE REPEATED MENTION IN THE PROPOSALS OF THE MARRIAGE BROKER ROLE BEING PLAYED BY SHALOM AND CHABOT. DAOUDY INQUIRED WHETHER THESE MEN REPRESENTED ANY ORGANIZATION. I SAID THEY DID NOT BUT WERE HERE IN THEIR CAPACITY AS CONCERNED, LEADING MEMBERS OF THE SYRIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY IN NEW

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YORK WITH RELATIVES AND OTHER LONG-STANDING TIES TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN SYRIA. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUESTION, I SAID THAT BOTH MEN WERE SEDULOUSLY AVOIDING ANY PUBLICITY ABOUT THEIR WORK ON BEHALF OF THIS HUMANITARIAN QUESTION. DAOUDY CAUTIONED THAT THE AL-ASSAD/CARTER EXCHANGE WAS NOT WIDELY KNOWN IN DAMASCUS AND THAT THE PRESIDENT'S UNDER-TAKING TO PRESIDENT CARTER WAS COMPLETELY "POLITICAL." I THEN BRIEFED DAOUDY ON PRECISE OFFICES IN MILITARY INTELLI-GENCE WITH WHICH SHALOM AND CHABOT TOGETHER WITH TOUTAH WERE IN CONTACT.

3. I THEN RETURNED TO THE EMBASSY ONLY TO FIND A DISTRAUGHT SHALOM, CHABOT AND TOUTAH WAITING FOR ME. THEY HAD GONE THAT SAME MORNING TO SEE LT. COL. ABD AL-SAMAD TO PRESENT THE THREE PROPOSALS JUST RECEIVED SO THAT THEY COULD BE ADDED TO THE NINE ALREADY IN ABD AL-SAMAD'S POSSESSION. ABD AL-SAMAD, HOWEVER, ADVISED THEM THAT SARG HAD TAKEN A POLITICAL DECISION TO REJECT THE MARRIAGE PROPOSAL APPLICATIONS. HE TOLD THEM THIS DECISION HAD BEEN RELAYED TO HIM BY "THE SECOND MAN IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPEAKING IN THE NAME OF THE PRESIDENT." OFFICIAL REPORTEDLY ADDED THAT PROPOSALS WERE TRANSPARENT FRAUD. ABD AL-SAMAD THEREUPON INSISTED ON RETURNING THE NINE APPLICATIONS TO TOUTAH. CURIOUSLY, ABD AL-SAMAD'S DIRECT SUPERIOR, COLONEL MESSAOUD, HAD ONLY MOMENTS BEFORE TOLD THE DELEGATION THAT ALL THE PROPOSALS REMAINED UNDER CONSIDERATION.
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4. UPON LEARNING OF THIS DEVELOPMENT FROM SHALOM, I IMMEDIATELY INFORMED DAOUDY AND ASKED HIS ADVICE HOW WE SHOULD NOW PROCEED IN VIEW OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S PERSONAL INTEREST IN THIS MATTER. I PLAN TO MEET WITH HIM AGAIN IN NEXT TWO-THREE DAYS TO URGE SYRIAN RECONSIDERATION AND CAUTION HIM OF THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF A FLAT SYRIAN REJECTION OF THESE CASES. (COMMENT: I HAVE IN MIND GEORGE GRUEN'S WARNING THAT PUBLIC CAMPAIGN WOULD BE LAUNCHED IN SIX-EIGHT WEEKS IF NO PROGRESS REPORTED.)
MEANWHILE SHALOM AND FRIENDS HAVE GONE TO ALEPPO FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND WILL RETURN ON MONDAY. LEWIN HAS RETURNED TO U.S.

5. COMMENT: WE DO NOT YET KNOW ENOUGH TO COMMENT MEANINGFULLY ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS. IT MAY BE, HOWEVER, AS TOUTAH WARNED US IN JUNE (DAMASCUS 3490) THAT SYRIANS SUSPECT MARRIAGE PROPOSALS TO BE NO MORE THAN A SUBTERFUGE TO GET SOME WOMEN OUT. YOU RECALL TOUTAH AND WE HAD WANTED AT LEAST A FEW MEN TO COME TO SYRIA AND HAVE THE MARRIAGES PERFORMED HERE. I WILL BE EMPHASIZING THE IMPRACTICABILITY OF SYRIA POSSIBLY MAKING THIS AS A REQUIREMENT IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THESE YOUNG

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MEN ARE ALL WORKING AND HAVE NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE FUNDS TO TAKE THE MANY WEEKS REQUIRED IN DAMASCUS TRAMPING FROM OFFICE TO OFFICE TO GET THE NEEDED CLEARANCES.

6. I DO NOT CREDIT AUTOMATICALLY THE STATEMENT BY THE SO-CALLED "NUMBER TWO IN FONMINISTRY" THAT HE WAS SPEAKING IN AL-ASSAD'S NAME, ESPECIALLY SINCE DAOUDY BETRAYED NO KNOWLEDGE DURING OUR MEETING THAT THE ARRANGEMENTS HAD BECOME DERAILED. I CONSIDER OUR BEST IMMEDIATE COURSE IS TO PUT THE HEAT ON DAOUDY.
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